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The Terror at Frog Lake

Fifty miles northwest of Lloydminister lies Frog Lake; and at the Frog Lake settlement on the morning of April 2nd, 1885, the certainty of death was in the air. The suspense of terror hung above the kneeling ~~xxxxxxxxxxxx~~ half-breeds, Indians and whites in the tiny Frog Lake mission.

Thomas Quinn, six feet six inches tall, broad shouldered, scout, frontiersman, American Civil War soldier and at present, Indian Agent, knew that death was only minutes away.

He looked at the few white men and women huddled together. He heard the two priests, Fathers Fafard and Marchand (conducting chanting) the Mass. He wondered whether any of them guessed how desperate the situation really was.

For days Quinn had seen the Rebellion growing. Reil and his half-breeds had whipped the Police at Duck Lake. Thirteen men lay dead and the Indians were jubliant--and dangerous. Well, Quinn had urged the whites to leave Frog Lake but he'd been voted down; and now, on this April morning, Wandering Spirit, *war chief of the Plain Crees, had herded all the whites into the church. This was the day, Quinn knew, for murder.

Now the service was over. What was it the priest had said? Peace....calm...confidence in the Indians? Something like that. Well, Quinn ~~knew Indians. Part Sioux himself, interpreter,~~ he feared the worst for himself and the others. The others--- Gowanlock, the millwright and his wife. John Delaney, the farming instructor. His wife. Dill, the trader. Gilchrist, the clerk. Old Williscraft, the mechanic. Gouin, a half-breed, but probably marked for death, too. The two priests....kindly men. Good men. Cameron, the Hudson's Bay store-keeper...got along well with the

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Indians. If anybody squeaked out of it Cameron stood the best chance. A slim chance, but a chance.

And here was Wandering Spirit entering the church.....war bonnet, rifle across his arm. He motioned for the whites to go outside. ~~What was he saying? "To Delaney's place?" Why the pretense? Why didn't the treacherous devil end it?~~

Quinn led the little band people out into the morning sunlight. And now Wandering Spirit stopped them.

"You will go to our camp," he said

This was the end. No safety in the settlement, none even in the church. Certainly none in the Indian camp. Why prolong the torture?

Quinn stepped toward Wandering Spirit.

"I will not go."

When Thomas Quinn refused to go another step toward the Cree camp, Wandering Spirit lifted his rifle and shot him through the heart. Thereafter the massacre was rapid and absolute. As Quinn fell, the priest, Father Fafard, rushed toward him to give absolution. Wandering Spirit shot him through the neck. The other priest, Father Marchand, ran toward his brother and was instantly killed.

Father Fafard, lying terribly wounded heard a friendly Catholic Indian whisper: "Lie still. Pretend to be dead." Dispite the warning the priest raised himself and crawled slowly toward Father Marchand. As he crawled he was shot through the heart by an Indian whom he had raised.

Charlie Gouin had fallen near Quinn. Writhing with his wound he was trying to get to his feet when the Indian, Miserable Man

came
[illegible]-out of the Hudson's Bay store, placed his rifle against
Gouins
[illegible] chest and shot him again.

Mrs. Gowanlock was walking beside her husband when suddenly he slumped to the ground. She threw herself on his body, put her face on his and waited for the ball that would kill her.

Delaney and his wife were walking a little way ahedd of the Gowanlocks. In front of them they saw old Williscraft fall to the ground, and at almost the same instant Mrs. Delaney saw an Indian aiming at her husband. With the shot Delaney reached out his arms to his wife. She caught him and they fell together. She lay for just an instant with her face against his before she was carried away by an Indian.

Gilchrist, the clerk [illegible], and Dill, the trader started to run. Indians on horseback chased them both down within a hundred yards and killed them.

Cameron, the Hudson's Bay man, with the help of his Indian friends, escaped injury. Since that terrible morning he has often told his own story: " I was in the Hudson's Bay shop filling an order given by Quinn to an Indian named Kittamageeyan (Kit a mag(e) yan) or Miserable Man when the first two shots were fired. The Indian snatched his parcel from the counter in front ofme and raced out of the shop. I followed him. He ran to the ridge, 125 paces away where poor Quinn lay already dead, and pressing his rifle against the chest of Charlie Gouinn the second victim, lying wounded on the ground, finished him with a second bullet.

A friendly Indian, Osawask, already with me and greatly alarmed, told me to go to the Indian camp half a mile away, but fearful for his own safety refused to accompany me. I started, although with no expectation that I should ever reach it.

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After one glance at the horror across the little depression on the opposite ridge, I turned away and walked on looking neither to right or left, anticipating momentarily my own turn would come and determined not to see when or from whence. A little later I met several armed Indians, but they neither hindered nor threatened me. A bright sun rode in a cloudless sky overhead. It was a beautiful, warm spring day.

"When I reached the camp I was taken to the lodge of the Wood Cree chief, Ooneepohayo, and there a half dozen of his leading followers in council swore to protect me. They brought in Wandering Spirit who agreed to their demands and promised I should be left alone. Not that his promise counted for much, for he would have shot me later at a council meeting but for the intervention of my red friends. I had had abundant evidence that morning that whatever was to happen I could look for no different treatment from that to which the other whites had been subjected.

"....had I been with the other white men at the moment of the massacre instead of a short distance away, I am certain I should not have escaped their fate. I sat with Wandering Spirit in his cell at the mounted police guardroom at Battleford the night before he was hanged and asked him the question. His answer was evasive, but it showed he had nox intention of sparing me whenxxxxxx he determined on his bloody enterprise. I stood next morning before the scaffold in the barrack yard and saw him die, with five more of his conspirators including Miserable Man who had left me in the shop when the shooting began."

There is a little cemetary at Onion Lake where all but two of the victims of the massacre lie buried. After the shooting so the story goes, an old Indian squaw washed the faces of the missionaries as they lay in death, and other Indians carried the bodies back to the chapel. A folktale relates how a picture of the Sacred Heart suddenly assumed a threatening attitude, and with a gesture of its hand signified the retribution to fall upon those who had comitted the murders. In terror the Indians threw the bodies of the priests into the cellar and set the church on fire.

It certainly is true that the buildings at Frog Lake were burned, and that the bodies of ~~all~~ the victims were later found by the Mounted Police in the cellars. The Police took up the bodies and carried them to Onion Lake.

The bodiesof the two martyr priests, however, no longer lie with the ~~rest~~ other. In 1928 their bodies were moved to the Oblate Missionary plot at St. Albert where their stones are a reminder of the martyrdom and terror of the Frog Lake Massacre.

By the Missionaries of the West helped smoke many tales & Perhaps the strangest tale is the told a double tale that was told by the Rev. Alfred Lynch an Anglican missionary who served at Ft. Hamilton, Dunvegan & other Peace River Posts.